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AUTHOR Broudy, H. S.
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ABSTRACT

A review of the history of changes in emphasis in the educational system covers the period from the 1930's to the present. After World War II the returning veterans attending college as a result of the GI Bill had a lasting effect on higher education. It forced a rethinking of teacher education, and the emerging schools of education and teacners colleges contended that preparation for teaching required a professional curriculum. Curriculum reform after Sputnik centered on "excellence" in science and math curricula. In the 1960's behavioral objectives and competency-based teacher education were espoused. In the 1970's subject matter curricula were attacked, and civil rights legislation and diverse groups charged the schools with the task of removing racism and discrimination in one generation. In the 1980's the emphasis is back to "excellence." The reasons for the swings in educational reform movements may be found in the constant tension between schooling for efficiency (which has to adapt to changing social conditions) and education (of which the goals and character remain remarkably constant). The problem of general education is that of providing youth with a mind educated to think and feel with the resources of the arts and sciences. The technological revolution will challenge schools to provide citizens with an educated mind to prevent the diminution of mind and self. (MD)

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PAST AND FUTURE IN EDUCATION*

H. S. Broudy
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

In the early years of the century looking through a stereoptican was a favorite diversion. It was a simple device by which each eye was presented with a slightly different view of the same object. The result was a single seemingly in-dimensional picture, duplicating the action of the brain in fusing the slightly different images conveyed by each eye. The key to stereoscopic vision is the right degree of similarity between the two images; too great a difference will not fuse.

I have tried to view the American public school from vantage points that theoretically should be sufficiently similar to yield a unified picture. The two pictures in my stereopticon have been the role of the school in (a) preparing the young in the various social roles for adult life and (b) in personal development. Since the Thirties these two pictures have rarely melded into unity. On the societal side, the school has had increasing difficulty in serving in loco parentis and in loco communitatis. On the personal side it has had no less difficulty serving in loco humanitatis, representing the ethos of the good life in the just community. There is a sense in which these two roles represent the difference between an efficient mind and an education one. Public schools have a hard time doing both or doing them equally well.

Inasmuch as most of my professional life has been spent in controversy a more apt metaphor than the stereopticon would be stereophonic sound,

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for it is the talk about educational problems that constitute controversy--stereophonic argument, so to speak, or as some would say, stereophonic babble. This is so in part because I regard controversy as the peoper arena for the doings of educational philosphers. They are not, with rare exceptions, much good in action, and yet as workers in an applied field, they must resist the temptation to float away from reality altogether. In the late 30s I participated in one of the half-dozen youth studies triggered by the depression. I seem to remember that the educational establishment was divided between those who blamed the college prep curriculum in high school for unemployment and those who feared lest the rush to vocational training would abandon citizenship, democratic and humanistic values.

The outcomes of those studies were (1) legislative proposals to provide more vocational training and (2) a document titled Education for All American Youth. Before the legislation could be enacted and the document implemented, World War II broke out and solved or rather dissolved the problem of unemployment and democracy.

After the war, veterans with GI benefits streamed into institutions of higher education. They sitrred up matters in general and the country club atmosphere on college campuses, but their impact was especially noticeable on teachers colleges in which the enrollment was likely to be made up largely of well-behaved young women. I recall an instance in which attendance at chapel at one of these colleges rose precipitously. This delighted the puzzled dean whose efforts to spiritualize the veterans had been taken politely but not seriously. The change, it turned out, was caused by

one of the veterans organizing a lottery based on the number of the selection in the hymnal that would be sung on a given day.

However, the veterans brought a seriousness of purpose that had lasting effect on higher education. It forced many of us to think about teacher education as a preparation for a challenging career, and the differences between classroom teaching as a craft and a profession.

In the early and middle 50s I was responding to the attacks on the public schools and especially on their teachers who allegedly were ruined by exposure to colleges of education.* I recall debating Professor Bestor at a conference of school superintendents at Babson Institute in Wellesley, Mass. I did not have to work very hard, because in attacking the teachers colleges for ruining the minds of high school teachers he had overlooked the fact that virtaully all high school teachers in Massachusetts, at that time, were graduates, not of teachers colleges, but of the liberal arts institutions on which presumably the escape from the "educational wasteland" depended.

The normal school clearly had been a training institution that in two years refreshed a high school graduate's basic skills that were to be taught in the elementary schools and the skills of teaching them. The emerging schools of education and teachers colleges contended that preparation for teaching had a cognitive base in philosophy, psychology, the social sciences--in short, that it required a professional curriculum in the science and art of pedagogy. As teachers colleges became state colleges and schools of education part of the univeristy, the tension between liberal

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*Among the volumes making the press were Mortimer Smith's And Madly Teach, Arthur E. Bestor's Educational Wasteland, Hyman Rickover's Education and Freedom, and Albert Lynd's Quackery in the Public Schools.

arts faculty and the educationists increased both on theoretical grounds and, in many instances, because so many teachers were returing to the university campus for summer school credits, not in the academic disciplines, but in education courses (curses). In trying to defend the claims of the college of educaticn to be preparing personnel for teaching as a profession, I found myself at odds not only with the liberal arts professors but with many school people as well. Teachers wanted the status of a profession, but in their daily encounter with the exigencies of the classroom, they yearned for the normal school craft training.

In the curriculum reform furor following Sputnik, "excellence" became a slogan under the banner of which the mathematics, physics, chemistry and biology curricula of the schools were reformed by "real" scholars. It occurred to some of my colleagues and myself that although excellence without elitist snobism was a desideratum beyond debate, democracy also had a claim on the public school. We therefore wrote a book called Democracy and Excellence in American Secondary Education (which escaped Mortimer Adler's notice until 1983).

A few professors, on occasion, demonstrated how by clever questioning pupils could master the latest theory in astronomy, quantum physics, let alone the logic of mathematics and structural linguistics. The attempt to jack up in a few years the consciousness of several generations of teachers to the abstractions of modern science was only partially successful despite the efforts of textbook publishers and the National Science Foundation.

In 1963 James Conant published The Education of American Teachers. I felt that its cavalier dismissal of the theoretical foundations of the

teacher education program was unwarranted. It was in effect a rejection of the systematic study of education and research with the exception of practice/clinical teaching, in the problems of education. However, many members of the educationist establishment felt it was poor taste on my part to take issue with a book from the pen of the president of Harvard University, enthusiastically received by presigious foundations. The Ford Foundation as well as Carnegie enthusiastically supported efforts to displace the standard teacher education curriculum in favor of a liberal arts degree plus a year of internship in the form of the MAT degree. My animadversions to the Conant volume made me persona non grata in high placed quarters.

Towards the end of the 60s behavioral objectives and competency-based teacher education were espoused by the American Association of Teachers Colleges, and sure enough I found myself debating Messers Popham, Howsam, and other influentials. They were pushing a scheme, which to my way of thinking, divided teaching into minute procedures (competencies) that could be mastered by monkeys let along prospective teachers. Educationists did not seem to be worried and joined heartily in the campaign to slice competencies as finely as possible. It would help teachers to know what was expected of them and the public to judge whether they were meeting these expectations. Like the attempts to make theoretical scientists out of the classroom teacher, the attempt to turn them into piece workers on the assembly line failed, if for no other reason than that the number of competencies soon mounted into the hundreds.

Came the seventies and excellence for the few turned into a demand for compassion for the many. Teaching came to mean "relating" and relating

came to mean caring, letting it all hang out. Subject matter curricula were ripped up and off. Civil rights legislation and diverse liberation groups charged the schools with the task of removing the effects of centuries of racism and discrimination in one school generation. I found myself arguing that the school liberates by imposing on the pupil the discipline of an educated mind, and that other agencies should take major responsibility for the liberation from poverty, hunger, disgraceful housing, and economic discrimination. But lo and behold in the 80s we are back to excellence!

I have never lacked a platform for the views I espoused either in written or spoken from, and I doubt that many of my colleagues have either. Why then have we been unable to prevent the same themes and the same crises from recurring in every decade? Why has the study of educational theory and the huge volume of research filling the pages of dozens of journals, reports, and books find us in 1983 and 84 mounting dozens of commissions with schemes to reform the schools once more? In large part, it is because the channels between theory and practice are not yet clear or well established. For a theory or idea to affect practice it is wise to secure a grant for implementation <u>before</u> beginning the research. Even more important is the lack of a learned consensus that can legitimately claim authority in any phase of schooling.

However, there is perhaps a deeper cause. It is the constant tension between schooling for efficiency, which has to adapt to changing conditions in the social order, and education, the goals and character of which remain remarkably constant over the centuries. These two pictures of presumably the same phenomenon seem to be too disparate for our stereopticon.

A similar discrepancy persists in the disparate views of the status of teaching. Is it a craft or a profession? Is the fact that teachers are holders of a baccalaureate degree make them professionals who, therefore, need little or no study of education? Will the public ever by willing to pay nearly three million classroom teachers a professional salary? Until these questions are answered or seriously entertained we must expect recurrent crises.

THE FUTURE

The internal tension between craft and profession shows little signs of easing, but there is some chance that it may be mitigated by current cries for excellence. The current trend toward stiffening the requirements for teacher preparations together with the gradual recognition that quality will cost money, may give us a new layer of educational personnel, viz., the genuinely professional teacher, but not three million of them. Perhaps 10% would constitute a career group that would be the rough analogue of the engineer to the factory foreman, the physician to the paramedics, the architect to the draftsperson, the lawyer to paralegals, the accountant to the bookkeeper, etc. They would be the decision makers on curriculum design and policy for the classroom and its implementation. The current staggers toward merit pay, rewards for excellence are awkward moves toward what may be a genuinely professional preparation of teachers.

Certain other problems will persist, especially those that pertain to preparing the young for participation in the social order, but alongside them will be that of redeeming the pledge of the public school to provide

all its youth with a mind educated to think and feel with the resources of the arts and sciences. This is the problem of general education, which is still having a bad time of it. Colleges and universities are rapidly abandoning it, albeit piously bemoaning its loss every decade. I would be surprised if it survives the end of the century. The pool from which the faculties of colleges and universities, whether in the sciences or the humanities are recruited, is made of scholarly specialists,not urgently interested in general education. There is little likelihood that this will change. If the schools, especially the secondary schools, do not provide general education, it may disappear entirely for most of the population.

The other development that will challenge schools is the latest technological revolution. We all have heard of making computer literacy universal and compulsory, because national survival presumably depends on it. No doubt computer controlled technology will affect American life as profoundly as did the steam engine, and electric power. This may well become the information society. I need not belabor the point. But there is a consequence of that revolution that does deserve our attention. It has to do with something called "exosomatics," a term Garrett Hardin attributed to A.J. Lotka ("An Evolutionist Looks at Computers," Datamation, 1969). It refers to transporting a function from within the human organism to an external machine. Locomotion is a common example, but so is mental arithmetic, mechanical hearts, and, as many hope, artificial intelligence. Every time a function is externalized, the organism has to find substitute ways of exercising it or risk its atrophy. Thus we have to jog and run or find time for walking to replace the previous needs for these functions.

Inventions, according to Hardin, can be regarded as so many slaves put at our disposal.

The powers of the mind are no exception to the effect of exosomatics. The computer will externalize many mental functions, and we shall properly rejoice in the new servants placed at our diposal. But that power too will be bought at a price. What do we do with our minds when machines do so much for them? What if the machines do it without our understanding how they do it? The great social effects of invention are realized only when its products can be mass-produced, but they cannot be mass-produced and marketed if the consumer has to understand how they work. Indeed, the less the consumer has to understand the product the more successful it is judged to be. A high technology and a diminished public mind are not incompatible. As a matter of plain fact, millions of Americans are so dependent on their technological slaves that an outage of electric power paralyzes them more completely than an outrage of the gods. The high enthusiasm for the electronic salvation of the economic system overlooks the possibility that while it may increase the need for skilled labor for the few it may decrease it for the many.

Paradoxically, the greater the success of the newest industrial revolution, the more the citizen will need an educated mind to prevent the diminution of mind and self. Just as the problems of self-determination, self-integration and self-realization have not been solved by the electric refrigerator, the telephone and the airplane, they will not be solved by electronic banking, robotics, and errorless word processing.